2004 Alexandria Community Survey

Introduction

The Center for Research & Public Policy (CRPP) is pleased to present the results of a *2004 Community Survey* conducted among residents of the City of Alexandria, Virginia.

The research study included a comprehensive telephone survey. Interviews were conducted among residents of the City of Alexandria by phone. CRPP, working together with City of Alexandria officials, designed the survey instrument to be used when calling City of Alexandria residents.

This report summarizes information collected from telephone surveys conducted September 13 – September 21, 2004.

Introduction

The survey instrument employed in the *2004 Community Survey* included the following areas for investigation:

❖ Views on quality of life in Alexandria;

❖ Reasons for living in Alexandria;

❖ Views on issues affecting Alexandria residents;

❖ Satisfaction with services provided by the City of Alexandria;

❖ Measuring the degree expectations are met;

❖ Awareness, use, and rating of services, programs, and facilities by Alexandria residents;

❖ Sources of information used to get information about City services, events and activities;

❖ Opinions on specific communication channels, such as the City's website and the newsletter "FYI Alexandria"

❖ Community involvement in City boards, commissions and council meetings;

❖ Current emergency preparedness practices;

❖ Perception of any unmet or under-met needs in the City of Alexandria; and,

❖ Demographics

Methodology

Using a quantitative research design, CRPP completed 1001 interviews among residents of the City of Alexandria.

All telephone interviews were conducted between September 13 and September 21, 2004. Residents were contacted between 5:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. weekdays and 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. on the weekend.

Survey input was provided by City of Alexandria officials.

Survey design at CRPP is a careful, deliberative process to ensure fair, objective and balanced surveys. Staff members, with years of survey design experience, edit out any bias. Further, all scales used by CRPP (either numeric, such as one through ten, or wording such as strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree) are balanced evenly. And, placement of questions is carefully accomplished so that order has minimal impact.

Methodology

All population-based surveys conducted by CRPP are proportional to population distributions within known census tracts, group blocks and blocks.

CRPP utilized a "super random digit" sampling procedure, which derives a working telephone sample of both listed and unlisted telephone numbers.

One survey instrument was used to elicit information from all City of Alexandria residents.

Survey respondents were offered the opportunity to take the survey in their native language, whatever that might be. Surveys ultimately were given in English, Spanish, and Arabic.

Methodology

CRPP maintained an 81% completion rate on all calls made during this *2004 Community Survey*.

Statistically, a sample of 1001 surveys represents a margin for error of +/-3.0% at a 95% confidence level.
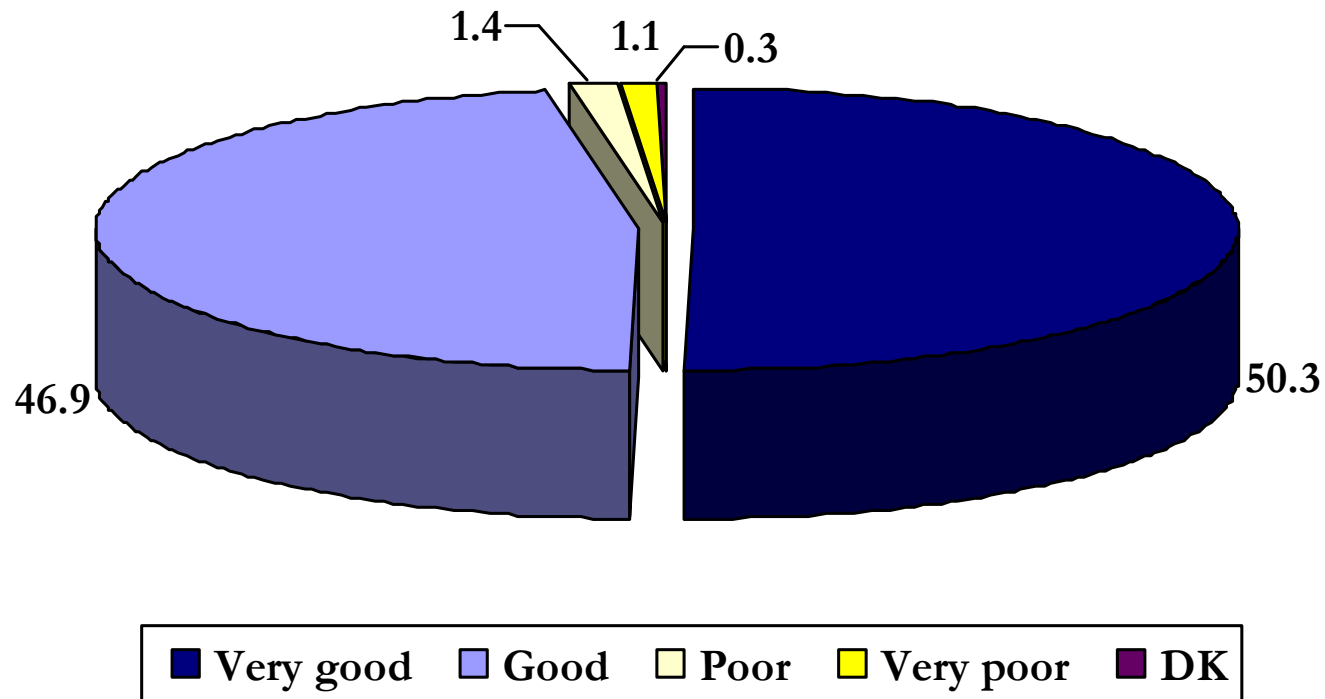
Highlights— Quality of Life

On Quality of Life

❖ **Impressively, 97.2% of all residents surveyed stated that their quality of life in Alexandria is very good (50.3%) or good (46.9%). Very few, 1.4% and 1.1%, suggested their quality of life in Alexandria was poor or very poor, respectively.**

Quality of Life

**Overall quality of life in Alexandria...**

1.4   1.1   0.3

50.3

46.9

■ Very good   ■ Good   □ Poor   ■ Very poor   ■ DK

Highlights— Quality of Life

❖ **Only Arabic heritage respondents provided lower positive quality of life ratings (84.0%).**

❖ **Compared to two years ago, 79.5% stated that their quality of life was better (20.3%) or good with no change (59.2%). Some noted their quality of life became worse (8.9%) while others (2.5%) said that there was no change and their quality of life was poor.**

Quality of Life

Overall quality of life in Alexandria, compared to two years ago

- 9.1
- 8.9
- 20.3
- 2.5
- 59.2
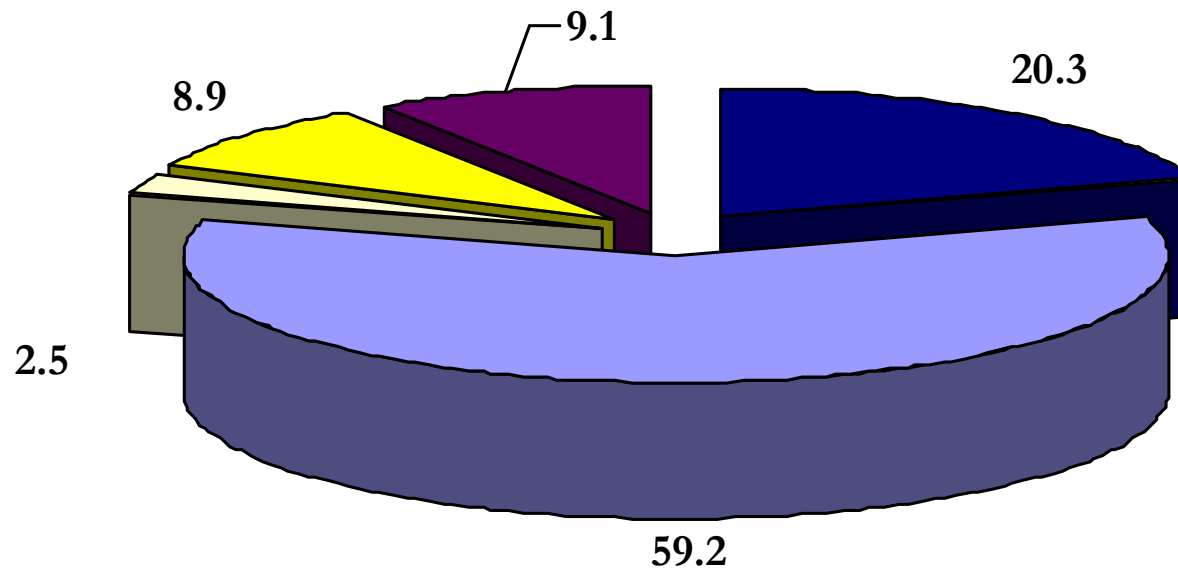
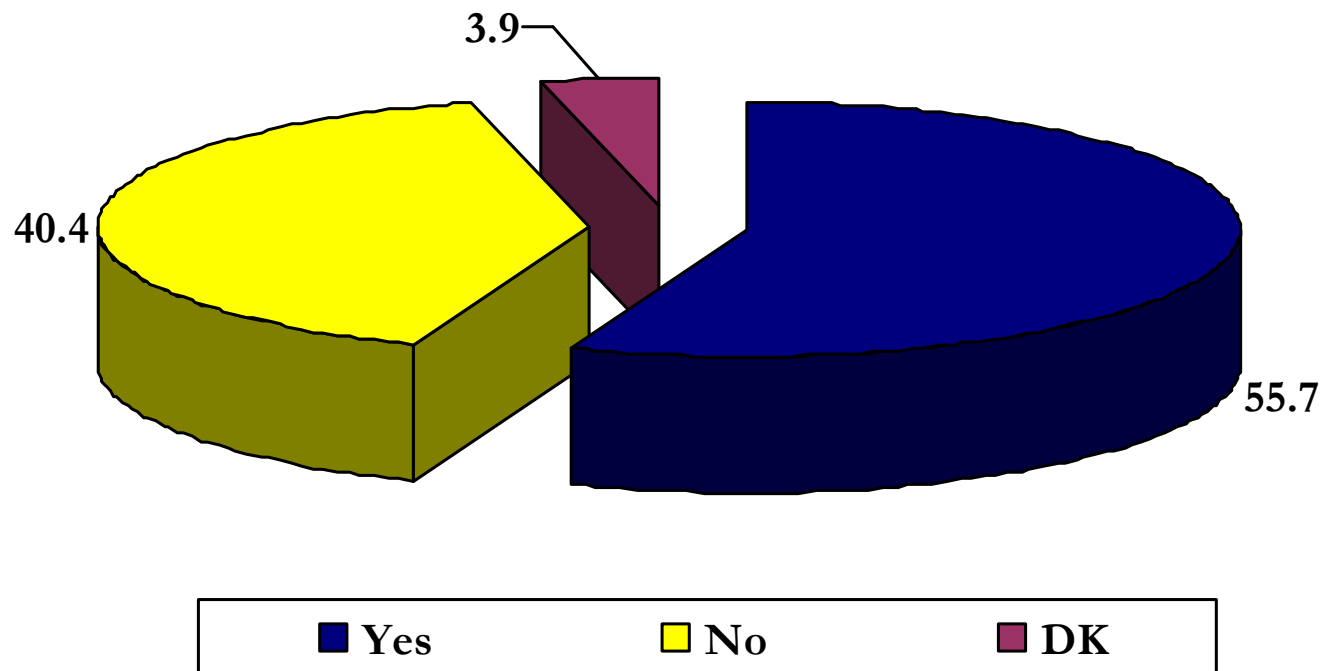**Legend:** ■ Better ■ No change, but good ■ No change, and poor ■ Worse ■ DK

Highlights—
Quality of Life

❖ **Just over half of all survey respondents (55.7%) stated that they were better off financially today than they were two years ago.**

Quality of Life

Better off financially today, than two years ago?

3.9

40.4

55.7

| ■ Yes | ■ No | ■ DK |

Highlights—
Quality of Life

❖ **Interestingly, "location" was cited most frequently as the leading reason for originally making the decision to live in or continue to live in Alexandria.**

❖ **Location (39.0%) was followed by work (13.9%), housing (13.5%), community (13.5%), nice neighborhoods (12.9%), birthplace (6.3%), historic nature of City (4.6%), diversity (3.9%), quality education system (3.4%), and recreational opportunities (2.1%).**

Quality of Life

Reasons for living in Alexandria	2004
Location (close to work/highways)	39.4%
Work (work in or near Alexandria)	13.9
Housing (nice house/affordable)	13.5
Community (town character/community feeling)	13.5
Nice neighborhoods	12.9
Birthplace (lived here all life)	6.3
Historic nature of City	4.6
Diversity	3.9
Quality education system	3.4
Recreational opportunities	2.1
Other	25.8

Highlights—
Quality of Life

❖ **Sixty-eight different responses were recorded when resident respondents were asked, in an open end format question, what they like most about Alexandria today.**

❖ **The top ten, in declining order, included: convenient in general (10.2%), near D.C. (6.1%), friendly people (5.4%), cultural diversity (5.1%), town has personality (5.1%), convenient for work (4.6%), size of community (4.0%), feels like a small town (3.8%), everything is in walking distance (3.4%), and town is wonderful (3.4%).**

Quality of Life

Things liked about Alexandria today	2004
Convenient in general	10.2%
Proximity to D.C.	6.1
Friendly people	5.4
Cultural diversity	5.1
Town has personality	5.1
Convenient for work	4.6
Size of the community	4.0
Feels like a small town	3.8
Everything within walking distance	3.4
Town is wonderful	3.4

Highlights— Local Issues

On Local Issues

❖ **Researchers asked respondents, in an open end format question, to name one or more issues they were most concerned about on a local level within Alexandria.**

❖ **Seventy-three issues were given. The top ten issues named, in declining order included: traffic (15.4%), taxes (12.1%), poor school system (8.4%), crime problems (8.1%), over-development (5.7%), parking (5.0%), limited affordable housing (4.6%), over polluted (3.2%), poor government efficiency (2.4%), open space diminishing (2.0%).**

Local Issues

Issue of most concern	2004
Traffic	15.4%
Taxes	12.1
Poor school systems	8.4
Crime problems	8.1
Over-development	5.7
Parking	5.0
Limited affordable housing	4.6
Over-population	3.2
Poor government efficiency	2.4
Open space diminishing	2.0
No reason / nothing	9.3

Highlights—
Local Issues

❖ Eight specific issues were named in a closed end format question, and respondents were asked to rate (on a scale of 1 to 10) how concerned or unconcerned they were about each issue.

❖ Three-quarters of all respondents, 73.8%, stated that they were very concerned about traffic. Two-thirds of respondents stated they were very concerned about: local real estate taxes, crime in the city, and lack of affordable housing – 67.1%, 65.1% and 62.0% respectively.

❖ Approximately one-half were very concerned about: safety and security, quality of public education, and amount of parks, fields and open space – 57.8%, 53.9% and 52.0% respectively. Almost two fifths, 39.5%, were very concerned about a lack of transportation alternatives to the car.

Local Issues

Issues	W/O DK's
	Concerned (1-4)
Traffic within Alexandria	73.8%
Local real estate taxes	67.1
Crime in the City	65.1
Lack of affordable housing	62.0
Safety and security	57.8
Quality of public education	53.9
Amount of parks, fields, and open space	52.0
Lack of transportation alternatives to the automobile	39.5

Highlights—
City Services

On City Services

❖ **Resident respondents, using a scale of one to ten, provided high and impressive satisfaction ratings for the following City services: Fire Department (91.5% of those providing a rating gave a 1 to 4 rating), Emergency Medical Services (89.9%), Police Department (84.9%), the courtesy of City Government staff (81.6%), parks and recreational facilities(81.2%), refuse and yard waste collection (79.9%), and recreational opportunities and programs (78.8%), and the recycling program (73.5%).**

❖ **Lower, but good to fair satisfaction ratings were recorded for the following services: condition of city sidewalks (67.0% of those providing a rating gave a 1 to 4 rating), performance of sanitary and storm sewer services (66.0%), condition of local roads (63.9%), and city snow removal services (62.9%).**

Highlights—
City Services

❖ **Poor satisfaction ratings were recorded for the following: parking availability in your neighborhood and parking availability in Old Town and other business districts .**

❖ **The overall value of City services was rated relatively high (1 to 4) by 71.9% of those providing a rating.**

❖ **The overall average positive rating (1 to 4) across the fifteen services measured was 72.2% (without "don't know" respondents).**

City Services

| Community Service	W/O Don't Know's	
	Good (1-4)	Poor (7-10)
Fire Department	91.5%	1.9%
Emergency medical services	89.9	3.0
Police Department	84.9	5.8
Courtesy of City government staff and employees	81.6	5.8
Parks and recreation facilities	81.2	4.7
Refuse and yard waste collection	79.9	7.6
Recreational opportunities/programs	78.8	7.5
Recycling program	73.5	12.3
Overall value of City services in light of taxes and fees paid	71.9	9.7
Condition of City sidewalks	67.0	8.9
Performance of sanitary and storm sewer services	66.0	11.7
Condition of local roads	63.9	11.6
City snow removal operations	62.9	15.9
Parking availability in your neighborhood	58.9	26.5
Parking availability in Old Town and other business districts	31.3	52.1
AVERAGE	**72.2%**	**12.3%**

Highlights—
City Services

❖ **Researchers asked all respondents how often the City of Alexandria meets their service expectations. A large majority of those providing a response (86.1%) noted the City meets their expectations always or most of the time. Another 10.7% stated "sometimes". Others, 3.1%, stated seldom or never.**

City Services

City of Alexandria meets your expectations (Without DK's)

Pie chart values: 0.8, 2.4, 3.2, 10.7, 17.5, 68.5
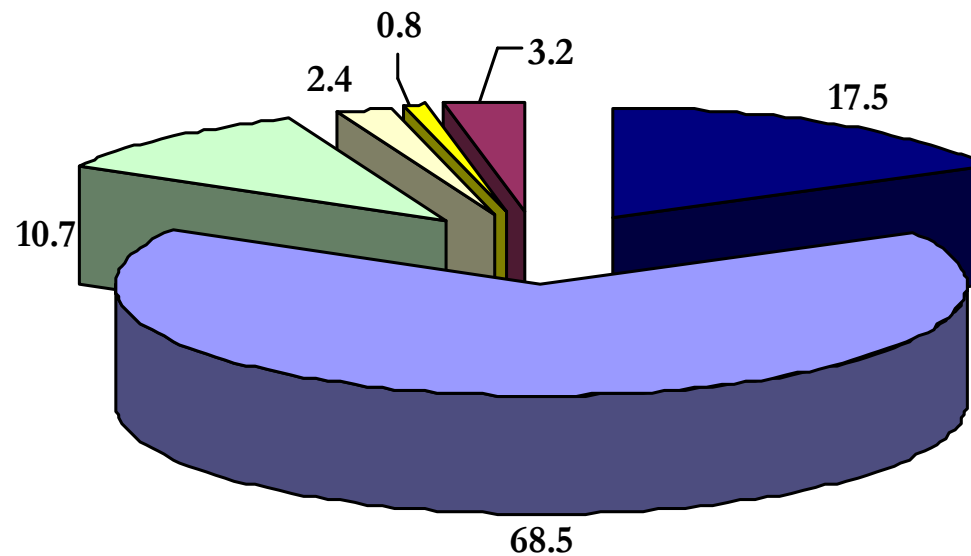
Legend: ■ Always ■ Most of the time ■ Sometimes ■ Seldom ■ Never ■ DK

Highlights— City Services

On Service Awareness and Use

❖ **The best known City services, among the twenty-four that were identified by CRPP to respondents, included: City 911 emergency service, Metro Bus and Rail service, motor vehicle registration services, the Alexandria Library, DASH (bus service), City sponsored events, the City's historic and cultural facilities, and animal control/shelter.**

❖ **The least known City services included: Round the clock internet Library resource service, services of the City's Office of Human Rights, services of the City's Office of Citizen Assistance, City Mental Health, Mental Retardation, Alcohol and Drug Abuse services, and services provided by the Alexandria Health Department.**

Highlights—City Services

- ❖ **The services rated highest (in the nineties) in satisfaction (1 to 4 on a scale of 10), among actual users, included: Round the clock internet Library resource services, Alexandria Library materials, City sponsored arts and cultural events, DASH bus service, 911 Emergency Services, the City's historic and cultural facilities.**

- ❖ **The overall average positive rating across the twenty-four services measured (among actual users) is 80.0%**

Service Awareness and Use

Services/Programs/Facilities	Good (1-4)
Round-the-clock internet Library resource services	98.0
The City's historic and cultural facilities, such as the Torpedo Factory, Gadsby's Tavern, Fort Ward, the Lyceum, the Friendship Firehouse, and Alexandria's Black History Museum	94.9
City-sponsored arts and cultural events	94.7
911 Emergency Service	94.4
DASH (bus service within Alexandria)	93.8
Alexandria Library books, tapes, CDs, DVDs and other materials	92.1
City-sponsored adult sports programs	89.0
Animal control/Animal Shelter	88.9
Programs and services offered at City recreation centers	88.6
City-sponsored events, such as the July City Birthday/Fireworks celebration or the annual Jazz Festival	87.9
City Mental Health, Mental Retardation, Alcohol and Drug Abuse services	86.4
Metro bus and rail service	85.6

Service Awareness and Use

| Services/Programs/Facilities (Continued…)	Good (1-4)
Tax payment services	84.6
City-sponsored youth sports programs (e.g., baseball, basketball and football)	84.2
City-maintained athletic fields	80.5
Motor vehicle registration services	76.2
Residential parking permit services	76.2
Services provided by the Alexandria Health Department	73.0
Services of the City's Office of Human Rights	70.2
Building permit and other services of the Code Enforcement Department	68.1
Department of Human Services programs, such as JobLink, child welfare, and programs for seniors and those with disabilities	67.6
Services of the City's Office of Citizen Assistance	64.5
Services related to the assessment of real estate taxes	59.7
Domestic violence or sexual assault services	21.4
AVERAGE	**80.0%**

Highlights—
City Leadership

❖ **With "don't know" respondents removed, a large majority, 89.7%, of all respondents stated that both elected and professional City officials are honest individuals dedicated to improving the quality of life in Alexandria.**

City Leadership

Are Alexandria City officials honest individuals? (Without DK's)

10.3

89.7

■ Yes   □ No
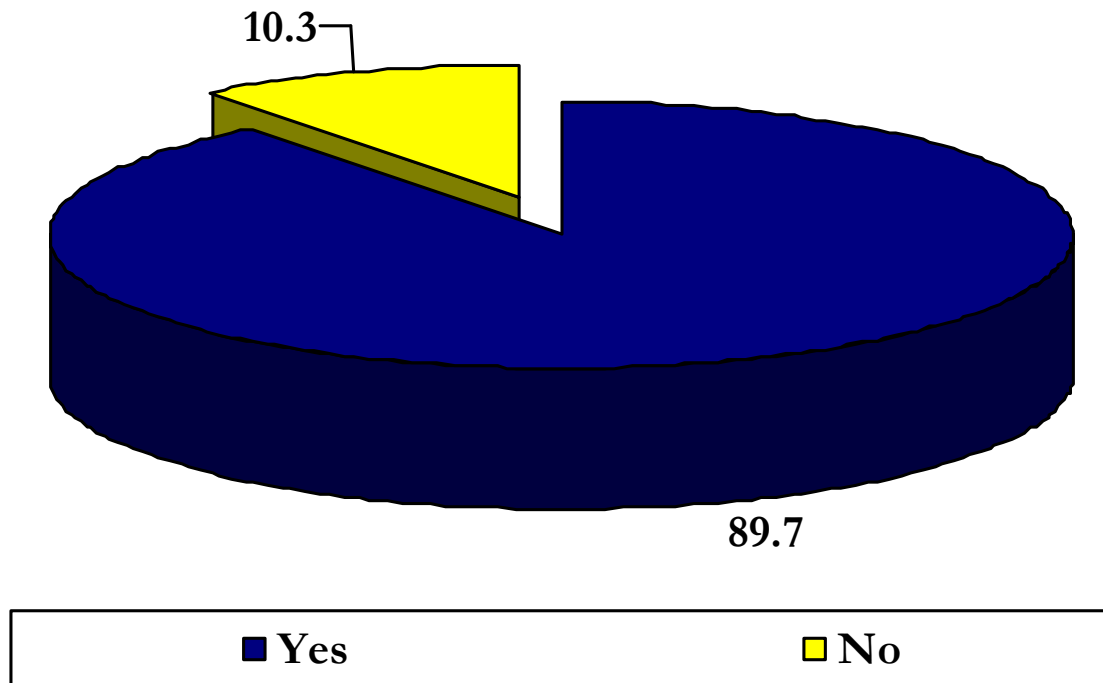
Highlights – Communications
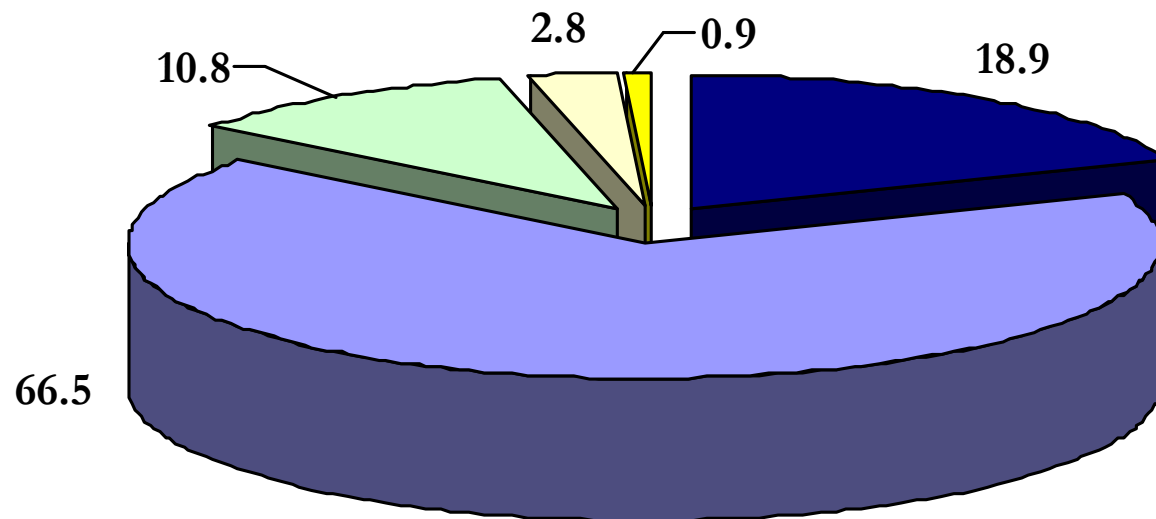
On Communication

- ❖ **Significantly, 85.4% stated that they believed messages, information and other communication from the City to be credible "always" or "most of the time".**

- ❖ **Another 10.8% stated they believed this communication is "sometimes" credible, while 2.5% noted communication is "seldom" credible and 0.9% said it was "never" credible. (Don't know respondents were removed from the data.)**

Communications

Are communications from the City credible? (Without DK's)

Pie chart values: 18.9, 66.5, 10.8, 2.8, 0.9

Legend: ■ Always ■ Most of the time ■ Sometimes ■ Seldom ■ Never

Highlights – Communications

❖ **In declining order, the following are ways respondents report they usually get information about City services (multiple responses were accepted): newspapers (39.9%), city pamphlets (32.9%), word of mouth (19.6%), City newsletter: FYI Alexandria (18.4%), internet (18.1%), cable TV (12.4%), phonebook (9.7%), city web site (6.5%), neighborhood associations (3.2%), and Churches (0.3%).**

Communications

Source used to get information about City services	2004
Newspapers	39.9%
City pamphlets, notices, flyers	32.9
Word of mouth	19.6
City newsletter: *FYI Alexandria*	18.4
Internet	18.1
Cable TV	12.4
Phonebook	9.7
City web site	6.5
Neighborhood associations	3.2
Churches	0.3

Highlights – Communications

❖ **Similarly, respondents were asked how they generally get information about upcoming City sponsored events and activities. In declining order, respondents reported: newspapers (46.2%), City pamphlets, notices, flyers (31.7%), City newsletter: FYI Alexandria (19.5%), word of mouth (18.6%), internet (12.0%), cable TV (11.5%), City web site (4.6%), Churches (4.6%), neighborhood associations (4.4%), phonebook (1.8%).**

Communications

| Source used to get information on City-sponsored events and activities	2004
Newspapers	46.2%
City pamphlets, notices, flyers	31.7
City newsletter: *FYI Alexandria*	19.5
Word of mouth	18.6
Internet	12.0
Cable TV	11.5
City web site	4.6
Neighborhood associations	4.4
Phonebook	1.8

Highlights – Communications

- ❖ **Impressively, 45.6% stated they have visited the City's web site.**

- ❖ **Visitors were asked to rate the website on three characteristics. The highest positive rating, 76.9%, was recorded for "usability or navigability" followed by 76.0% for "interesting content" and 73.9% for "design or graphics".**

Communications

Visited City of Alexandria web site?

45.6

54.4

| ■ Yes | □ No |
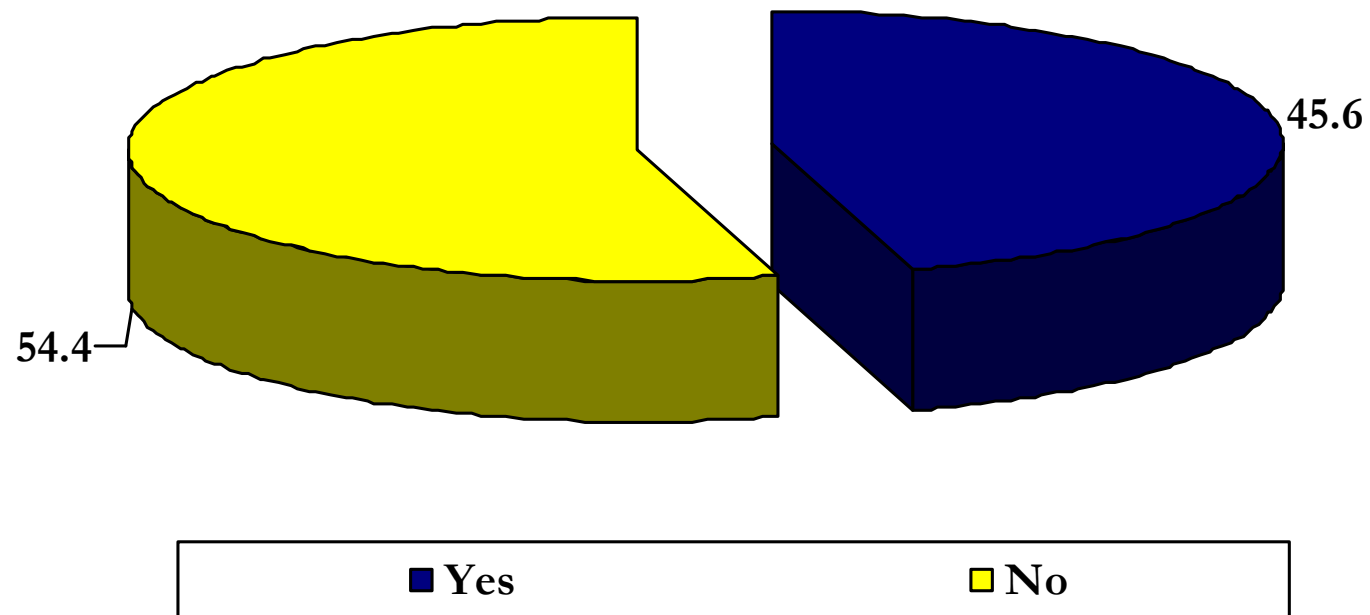
Highlights – Communications

❖ **Just over half of all survey respondents, 53.5%, recall the City newsletter entitled: "FYI Alexandria".**

❖ **Almost sixty percent (59.1%) stated they read the newsletter "always" or "most of the time," and another 20.3% said they read the newsletter "sometimes" for a new composite total of 79.5%. Some, 11.6%, seldom read the newsletter while 9.0% never read the publication.**

❖ **The newsletter received positive ratings on both design/graphics and interesting content – 80.4% and 79.8% respectively.**

Communications

Recall *"FYI Alexandria"*

3.2

43.3

53.5

■ Yes   □ No   □ DK
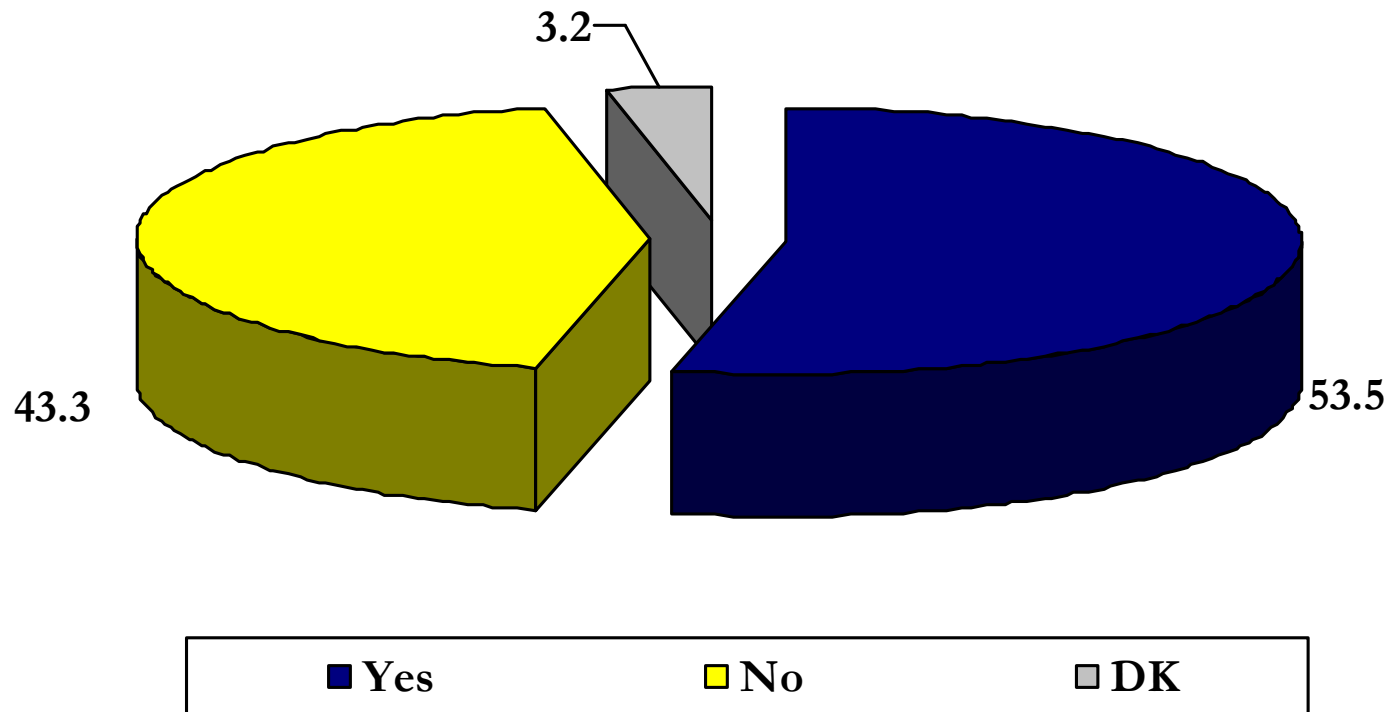
Highlights —
Community Involvement

On Community Involvement

❖ **One quarter of all respondents (25.6%) report they have attended a City Council meeting, while 16.1% stated they have attended a Planning Commission Meeting, and 5.1% said they have served on a City Board or Commission.**

Highlights — Emergency Preparedness

On Emergency Preparedness

❖ **Researchers asked all respondents how prepared they were for emergencies. Just over half reported having developed a communication plan to stay in touch with friends and relatives (53.9%). Just under half suggested they have assembled an emergency supply kit (43.3%), taken a course such as emergency preparedness, CPR, or First Aid (43.1%), or created a formal or informal household emergency preparedness plan (42.6%).**

Highlights— Community Need

On Community Need

❖ **In a final open end format question, respondents were asked about any needs they or the Alexandria community might have that are either unmet or under-met.**

❖ **Ninety-nine different needs were cited. While 29.7% of responses were none/cannot recall/nothing, the top ten named needs included (in declining order): more affordable housing (6.8%), more parking and enforcement (4.5%), traffic reduction (3.4%), improved public transportation (3.3%), better schools and teachers (3.2%), more open space (2.7%), more police (2.5%), more parks (2.0%), need lower taxes (1.8%), and more after school programs (1.7%).**

Community Need

Unmet/Undermet needs	% of responses
More affordable housing	6.8%
More parking and enforcement	4.5
Traffic reduction	3.4
Improved public transportation	3.3
Better schools / teachers	3.2
More open space	2.7
More police	2.5
More parks	2.0
Need lower taxes	1.8
More after-school programs	1.7
None/Cannot recall/nothing	29.7

Thank you for the opportunity to present

Any Questions ?